

Dear colleagues,

Surprisingly, I still hear pet owners saying their veterinarian told them to isolate their puppies until after their last vaccines. It's time for us to move beyond this as a profession and make the case for socialization.

Fear and anxiety are the most common underlying emotional motivations for most canine behaviour problems, including aggression, excessive vocalization, and destructive behaviour. Fearfulness is a multi-factorial trait which can be influenced by genetics, level of socialization during their sensitive period, and life experience. As veterinarians, the factor we often have the most control over is making appropriate socialization recommendations.

Smart ways to provide socialization opportunities that minimize the risk of exposure to infectious diseases exist. Puppies attending socialization classes were no more likely to contract parvovirus than puppies who did not attend classes in a 2014 study.¹ The socialization window for dogs ends by 16 weeks, which usually coincides with the last vaccine. If we recommend puppy owners wait to expose their dog to the world until the puppy vaccine series is complete, we are missing a crucial opportunity to protect the puppy's long-term behavioural health.

Three general tips for successful puppy socialization we share with new puppy owners and want to share with you, are:

Avoiding Infectious Diseases

Dog parks, vet office front lawns, pet stores, and high-density dog neighbourhoods are terrible choices for puppy socialization locations, due to infectious disease risk.

Instead, puppies should go to homes with friendly & healthy adult dogs who are fully-vaccinated. Hardware and grocery store parking lots are great places for puppies to safely meet a wide variety of people outside.

When considering puppy class referrals, first check what precautions. At a minimum, they should check vaccination and parasite prevention records, and clean with a product that effectively kills CPV.

Socialization, not Sensitization

Puppies should never be restrained or forced into uncomfortable situations during socialization. Failure to give puppies choice and control over their environments can lead to increased fear (sensitization). Puppy guardians often need to be educated to recognize fearful body language. Aim for all positive experiences, and be prepared to remove puppies from environments or experiences that are uncomfortable for them.

Beyond Puppy Class

Recommending puppy socialization classes is a great first step, but simply attending a once-weekly socialization class will not be enough. Puppy guardians need to think ahead to the experiences their puppy will need to be comfortable with long-term and provide exposure to these experiences during the sensitive period. For example, puppies growing up in rural areas may need to take day trips in to more urban areas to get used to city noises and crowded streets if they will eventually move to the city. If sailing is a favourite Summer activity then a puppy being raised in the Fall or Winter needs to be exposed to water and unstable surfaces such as floating structures.

We want to make sure that we communicate with the guardian that socialization can feel like a full-time job, but it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect their dog's mental well-being and should not be wasted. A great resource for both veterinarians and guardians is a socialization checklist such as Dr. Sophia Yin's. These tools help puppy guardians make the most of the socialization period.

Thank you for working with me to prevent unnecessary suffering,

Karen van Haaften, DVM, DACVB
Senior Manager, Animal Behaviour & Welfare

1. Stepita, Meredith E., Melissa J. Bain, and Philip H. Kass. "Frequency of CPV infection in vaccinated puppies that attended puppy socialization classes." *Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association* 49.2 (2013): 95-100.

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Do you have questions or feedback for the BC SPCA?

Please email us at outreach@sPCA.bc.ca

The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BC SPCA) is a not-for-profit organization reliant on donations from the public.

Veterinarians volunteer time and talent for wildfire evacuees

Once again this summer, wildfires raged through the province, with many people and animals forced to flee their homes. In Prince George, 64 dogs were cared for by BC SPCA staff and volunteers at the BC SPCA Dog Evacuation Centre and the BC SPCA North Cariboo branch.

Two of the volunteers who assisted the displaced pets were veterinarians Caroline Stean and Caitlin McLagan. We followed up with them to find out more about their experiences.

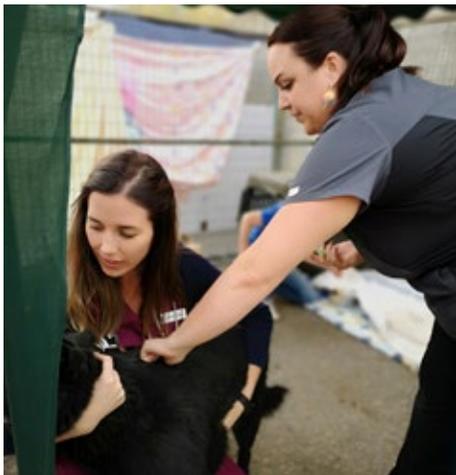
How did you find out about the need for veterinarians at the evacuation centre?

Stean: “I received an email from the BC SPCA that veterinarians were urgently needed and I responded that afternoon that I had a few days off coming up. I was booked on a flight out the very next day.”

McLagan: “I completed externships during vet school with the Vancouver SPCA and I volunteer in a veterinary capacity at Charlie’s Pet Food Bank, a free monthly vet clinic providing preventative health services to people in the downtown Eastside of Vancouver. Through my relationships with the staff I learned about the need up North and started packing.”

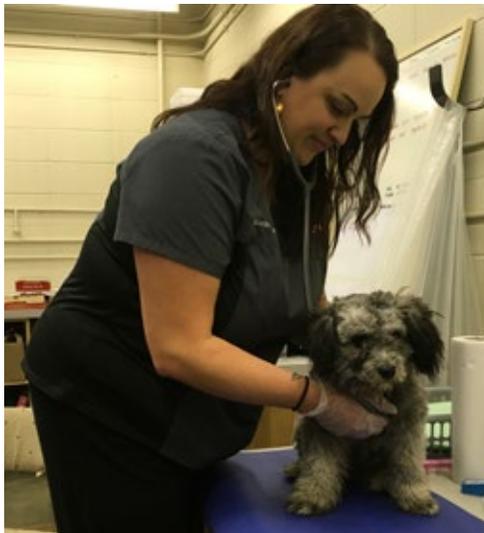
What did your work at the evacuation center entail?

McLagan: “We worked closely with two other medical team volunteers, registered veterinary technician Nicole McClelland and veterinary assistant Paige Millward. Together we examined animals that shelter staff had identified as having medical and/or behavioral concerns.”



Stean: “The most common health concerns we encountered in Prince George were kennel cough and diarrhea. As veterinarians, we could help troubleshoot problems, like how to prevent spread of disease within these temporary shelters.”

In addition, these hero veterinarians ensured animals were vaccinated and microchipped as they awaited return to their families and communities. Any animals that required more diagnostics or more intensive observation were taken to a nearby veterinary clinic.



Veterinarians ensured that animals like Bear Bear had a positive experience and felt safe while they were away from their familiar homes.

What role can veterinarians play in these kinds of emergencies?

McLagan: “Veterinarians play a valuable role in emergency response because we hold important skills for the assessment of mental and physical health in animals affected by disasters. I think any ideal disaster response involves many types of volunteers. Veterinarians are one part of such a team.”

Stean: “In addition to providing the assessment and treatment of the animals, we also have the opportunity to educate owners about the importance of vaccinating and spaying/neutering.”

What were your biggest take-aways from your time in Prince George?

Stean: “I was so impressed with the set-up of the shelter and really liked that volunteers were encouraged to bring up any concerns they had with any of the animals so we could examine them and treat accordingly.”

McLagan: “I agree, the medical team worked closely with the sheltering staff who were doing an absolutely incredible job at keeping things organized. I was so struck by the teamwork involved and the passion of the staff and volunteers! Of course, the animals were also amazing and the human family members shared their stories with us and were incredibly grateful.”

What would you say to veterinarians considering volunteering for the BC SPCA?

Stean: “Definitely volunteer! Initially I was nervous; I had never volunteered with the SPCA before and then I was flying out to Prince George less than 24 hours after responding to that initial email. It was extremely rewarding and I’d volunteer again in a heartbeat.”

McLagan: “I highly recommend it! Volunteering with an organization like the BC SPCA provides me with perspective and a feeling that I have used my skills for valuable work that can be literally life-changing for pets and their families. It’s incredibly worthwhile and energizing.”

Are you a veterinarian interested in volunteering with the BC SPCA?

From supporting veterinary days at a BC SPCA run pet food bank to microchips clinics to assisting in emergency events, your time and expertise is valued.

Contact your local BC SPCA branch or email us at outreach@spca.bc.ca to find out how you can work with us to help more animals in need.



Staff at Sechelt clinic embraces Fear Free program

A cocker spaniel comes bounding through the door enthusiastically, ready for her vet visit. It didn't used to be this way for the dog that comes to the practice for frequent ear treatments. "Before, she would want to lunge for us if we even went close to her ears. But after a few weeks of treats and conditioning, we won her over and now she pulls her owners to our door," says Darla Messner Practice Manager at the Eagle Ridge Veterinary Hospital in Sechelt.

Messner describes the practice as a happier and calmer place since all the staff took the Fear Free certification and the veterinary hospital implemented the program. "It has radically changed our work, not only in how we administer treatment to our patients, but also how we see our patients' physical cues and behavior," she explains. "Once you recognize signs of fear, anxiety and stress in pets (and people) you feel compelled to do what you can to help them."

In January 2016, staff at the clinic completed the Fear Free certification. This year, most staff completed the second level course in order to increase their knowledge level and implement new ideas. The program teaches to recognize fear anxiety and stress in patients and what can be done to alleviate it. The second level goes deeper into fear free handling and techniques.

The biggest challenge, Messner says, is that they have seen is some clients being apprehensive with the amount of treats that they give to their pets during the visit and the amount of time involved in changing the animals' response. "Typically, if a patient is showing fear or stress with a treatment that we are trying to do, we will stop the treatment and try something else. This may mean that a pet goes home and we try again in a couple days or we have them come in for a few visits with no treatment so the pet can become more comfortable with us," Messner explains, adding that clients are usually won

over when they see how much happier their pet is with the change in handling.

Sometimes, pets are in an emergency situation and need treatment right away. The program addresses these needs and provides guidance for what action to take to make sure the pet is treated without delay, experiencing the least fear possible in that scenario.

Messner concludes that the practice would wholeheartedly recommend the Fear Free Certification to any veterinary team. "The certification can improve your medical treatments as patients typically recover from illness faster if they are free from fear, anxiety and stress."

To learn more about fear-free certification visit fearfreepets.com.



The BC Pet Registry gets a new look

Since 2015, the BC Pet Registry has been working with veterinary clinics and shelters across the province to ensure lost pets can be reunited with their families.

What's new?

The BC Pet Registry team has kept the features that make the BC Pet Registry great, while including some amazing new features such as:

- The BC Pet Registry Store: Shop online! Create an account with the BC Pet Registry's online store to order microchips, scanners, and promotional materials for your organization! Take 20% off your first microchip order by using promo code: LOVEID.
- New product pricing: For ease of registration, microchips are now bundled with either Annual or Lifetime registrations.
- BC Pet Registry Location Finder: Clinic and hospital locations are listed on bcpetregistry.ca as a location pet owners can visit to microchip and register their pets! We are happy to promote our BC Pet Registry community partners.
- More pet types: Users can now register other small animals, including ferrets and birds!

This fall, the BC Pet Registry has made big changes to their website that will improve the experience of veterinary clinics using the registry and benefit pets and their families.

- Lost pet features: Pet owners can now mark their pet as "Lost" when they go missing, which is shared with you and the rest of the BC Pet Registry community.
- Pet medical & behavioural information: Add crucial medical and behavioural information that veterinarians and shelters should know in case a pet goes missing.

With your help, we can get more pets home than ever before! Start registering microchips or tattoos with the BC Pet Registry today.

To register your clinic for a free community account or to find out more about the BC Pet Registry, please visit bcpetregistry.ca.

Contact:

info@bcpetregistry.ca

1-855-622-7722

bcpetregistry.ca



Decrease in Cat Overpopulation Thanks to Collaboration

In the winter and spring of 2018, the BC SPCA Shuswap branch ran a spay/neuter program with the help of a PetSmart Charities of Canada grant to fix 350 owned cats in the town of Salmon Arm. The city had been struggling with cat overpopulation for several years, with a constant stream of stray kittens and cats coming into the shelter. Three local veterinary clinics came on board with a commitment to special rates and appointment availability to make the program a success.

“We wholeheartedly supported the program, although we were initially skeptical about the lofty goal of achieving the 350 surgeries in a year,” says Jim McEwan, Practice Manager at the Shuswap Veterinary Clinic. The clinic completed over half of the surgeries for the program. “It’s a real credit to the collaboration of partners coming together to support a common interest that the grant was completed in such a short time.” In less than six months, 380 at-risk cats received a surgery.

McEwan adds, “As a veterinary partner we were thrilled to be able to play a role in helping with this program.” Staff at the clinic have shared with him that they particularly appreciated the opportunity to discuss with program participants about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle for their pets.

The grant made an immediate impact in the community. Kitten intake has been significantly lower this year to date compared to previous years and because of the reduced intake, the branch has been able to assist surrounding areas by taking in cats. The branch is on track for a 40% decrease in cat and kitten intake this year compared to the previous year.

For veterinarians thinking about getting involved in a low cost spay/neuter program with their local BC SPCA branch, or running a program of their own, Shuswap Veterinary Clinic encourages them to jump on the chance. McEwan notes, “In addition to addressing the problem of overpopulation of felines, programs like these are an opportunity for the clinic to showcase your community responsibility.”



Transparency Leads The Way To More Lives Saved

In 2016, the BC SPCA implemented the Asilomar Accords data collection system in all sheltering branches. This process is part of ongoing efforts to save more companion animals, assure consistent operational practices, utilize resources to help the greatest number of animals possible, and promote transparency and collaboration. The policy, which includes determining treatability for all medical and behavioural conditions, is available to the public here: https://spca.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Asilomar_Accords_and_Adoptability_Guidelines_Policy_V_2016-08-04.pdf

2017 was our first full year of data. One of the purposes of reporting this data is transparency regarding the numbers of animal euthanized for treatable conditions. Of 22,106 animal outcomes, we euthanized 2136 animals in 2017 (about 10% of total intakes for a Live Release Rate of 90%). Of these, 17.7% fell into Treatable categories, and 78.8% were considered Untreatable (the categories were determined by a public opinion poll of what is generally considered treatable in BC communities and not by the BC SPCA). There were no Healthy animals

euthanized. This report can be found here: <https://spca.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/BC-SPCA-2017-Asilomar-Annual-Report.pdf>

When we analyzed the Asilomar category of incoming animals, we found that only 39.6% of incoming animals were categorized as Healthy. Most incoming animals fell into the Treatable categories (53.7%). This fits with our impression that more and more animals are coming in with medical and behavioural conditions requiring treatment. We are very grateful to BC veterinarians for partnering with us to provide medical treatment to the 11,308 Treatable animals who entered our shelters in 2017.

Collecting this data is starting to give us a better idea of what resources need to be put into place to save more Treatable animals. The ultimate, long-term goal of implementing these Guidelines is for decisions regarding shelter animal treatability and adoptability to mirror the opinions held by the larger community, so that all healthy and treatable shelter animals who do not pose a risk to public safety can be rehomed.